

# WHICH VERSION TODAY?

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dr. Sakae Kubo and Dr. Walter Specht are the authors of a 1975 publication by Zondervan Publishing House, entitled *So Many Versions?* Readers of this MINISTRY insert who would desire a fuller treatment of the subject of modern English versions of the Bible, with specific evaluations of twenty of the most significant of them, would undoubtedly find the Kubo-Specht volume of value.

## INTRODUCTION

With the growing popularity of several of the most recent English versions of the Bible, some pastors, teachers, youth leaders, administrators, and Bible students developed a concern that popularized versions might come to be considered "the Bible" by Seventh-day Adventists. For some time, therefore, an *ad hoc* committee of the General Conference has been studying a program that would inform the various elements that make up the church as to the relative value and usefulness of these many new versions. As a part of that program, this insert in THE MINISTRY is being presented by the committee.

The authors, Drs. Kubo and Specht, of Andrews University Seminary, are specialists in the field of Biblical manuscripts. They give a fair and objective evaluation of the wave of new English versions, showing both strengths and limitations. The Biblical Research office of the General Conference has considered this matter of sufficient moment to underwrite the inclusion of this insert in this issue of THE MINISTRY.

Gordon M. Hyde, *Secretary*  
*Ad Hoc Committee on Versions*

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## WHICH VERSION TODAY?

### The Bible for the People

The impetus to translate the Bible into English came from the conviction that the Scriptures belong to the people, that the Bible was not intended for scholars alone, but for common ordinary men and women. It was this concept that led to translations in the vernacular. The first complete English Bible is credited to John Wycliffe in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

Wycliffe held that the Bible was the codification of the law of God and that every man was directly responsible to obey it. "But if every man was responsible to obey the Bible, . . . it followed that every man must know what to obey. Therefore the whole Bible should be accessible to him in a form that he could understand."—F. F. BRUCE, *The English Bible*, p. 13. To meet the needs of ordinary people, Wycliffe, in his version, used the plain, pithy English of his time. In the revised edition of this Bible, John Purvey wrote in the Preface:

Though covetous clerks are mad through simony, heresy and many other sins, and despise and impede Holy Writ as much as they can, yet the unlearned cry after Holy Writ to know it, with great cost and peril of their lives. For these reasons, and others, a simple creature hath translated the Bible out of Latin into English.—Quoted in Ira Maurice Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible* (third revised edition by William A. Irwin and Allen P. Wikgren), p. 236.

In 1516 the first published Greek NT was edited by Erasmus. In the Preface to it, this great humanist wrote:

I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Holy Scriptures, translated into the common tongue, should be read by the unlearned. Christ desires His mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I could wish that even all women should read the Gospel and St. Paul's Epistles, and I would that they were translated into all the languages of all Christian people, that they might be read and known not merely by the Scots and the Irish but even by the Turks and the Saracens. I wish that the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plough, that the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and that the traveller might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them.—Quoted in F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible*, p. 29.

In 1525, William Tyndale risked his life to make the first translation of the NT into English directly from the Greek. What was it that inspired him to carry on this dangerous and daring work of translation that led to his martyrdom in 1536? In his note, "W.T. to the Reader," which precedes his translation of the Pentateuch, he wrote: "Which thinge onlye moved me to translate the new testament. Because I had perceaved by experyence how it was impossible to stablysh the laye people in

any truth excepte ye scripture were playnly layde before their eyes, in their mother tonge, that they might se the processe, ordre and meaninge of the texte. . . ." In one of his controversies with a churchman of his time, according to Fox, Tyndale said, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest." To do this was Tyndale's dream, and he did his work so well that he, more than any other man, molded the language of our English Bible down to, and including, the Revised Standard Version (R.S.V.).

When The King James Version (K.J.V.) was produced in 1611, Miles Smith, the editor of the project, wrote a lengthy Preface for it called "The Translators to the Reader." This important document, unfortunately rarely included in the K.J.V. today, reveals much regarding the purpose, attitudes, and methods of the translators. In it we are told that the task of translating is one "which helpeth forward to the saving of soules. Now what can bee more availeable thereto, than to deliver Gods booke unto Gods people in a tongue which they can understand?"

Miles Smith takes great pains to justify the need for translating the Bible into the vernacular. He asks: "But now what pietie without truthe? what truthe (what saving truthe) without the word of God? What word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the Scripture? . . . They can make us wise unto salvation. . . . If we be ignorant they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reforme us, if in heavines, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if colde, inflame us."

A little later he asks: "But how shall men meditate in that, which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknownen tongue? . . . Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtaine, that we may looke into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that wee may come by the water. . . . Indeede without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacobs well (which was deepe) without a bucket or some thing to draw with. . . ."

The K.J.V. was in no sense a brand-new translation. Rather it was a revision of the earlier English Bibles of the sixteenth century. In it were incorporated what had been found excellent in earlier translations. Actually the basic structure and most of its wording go back to the literary genius of William Tyndale. The Coverdale, Thomas Matthew, Great, Geneva, and Bishop's Bibles were all revisions

of Tyndale's work. Miles Smith in the Preface declared:

Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one; . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our indeavour, that our mark.—Quoted in F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible*, pp. 101, 102.

### The Case for Revisions

The K.J.V. was produced in a period when the English literary taste of writers was high, and this version is a literary masterpiece. As such it held undisputed sway in the English-speaking world for more than two centuries. But with the passing of time as Biblical scholarship advanced and the English language changed there came repeated demands for a revision in the interest of accuracy.

For one thing, with the discovery of older and better manuscripts it became evident that the NT of the K.J.V. is based on something less than the best Greek text. The Greek manuscripts available to the translators in 1611 all belonged to the medieval period. Between those manuscripts and the autographs there were numerous copyings resulting in the introduction of many scribal errors into the sacred text although these affect only a very small part of the wording of the whole Bible. Of all the leading Greek manuscripts of the NT known today scarcely any were known when the K.J.V. was produced. Hence, accuracy demanded a revision based on better manuscripts.

Furthermore, a better understanding of OT passages, particularly in the prophetic and poetic books needed to be reflected in a revision. Finally, the English language had changed materially, and obsolete words, archaisms, and expressions whose meaning had changed needed to be weeded out of a good translation. Consequently in 1881 the English R.V. of the NT appeared, and in 1885 the entire Bible. The readings and renderings preferred by the American Committee of Revision were incorporated in the American Standard Version of 1901.

The chief emphasis in these revisions was on accuracy. Not only were they based on an improved Greek text, but they made a more discriminating use of the grammatical principles of the Biblical languages. In the interest of accuracy they also strove for consistency in rendering. They undertook to translate a given word as far as possible by the same English word. Their idea of faithfulness to the original was a meticulous word-for-word reproduction of the Greek, following whenever possible the order of the Greek words rather than the natural English order. They tried to

translate the Greek article and tenses with precision. They represented the best in the Biblical scholarship of their time.

Nevertheless these versions never displaced the K.J.V. in the minds of the church-going populace. The English language used in the revisions lacked the beauty and charm of the K.J.V. Their meticulous word-for-word rendering resulted in unidiomatic, stiff, and pedantic English. They were widely used in colleges and seminaries and for careful study, but the K.J.V. retained its hold on English-speaking people all over the world.

Meanwhile, to the great masses of people outside the church and to the younger generation within the church, the language of the K.J.V. was becoming more strange and somewhat foreign. Like all living languages, English is constantly changing. Some words and expressions become obsolete, while the meaning of others radically changes with the passing of time. The result is that the unchurched masses who lack training in sixteenth and seventeenth century English literature find that the K.J.V. does not speak to them with desirable clarity.

Without any desire to discourage the reading of the K.J.V., it may be noted that many, even those familiar with church language, find words and expressions in it quite foreign to them. To take an extreme example, the modern reader would have trouble understanding the K.J.V. of 2 Corinthians 6:12: "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." What does it mean to "comfort the feeble-minded" (1 Thess. 5:14)? When Luke writes, "after those days we took up our carriages," what did they take up? Or on the voyage to Rome when they "fetched a compass" (Acts 28:18), what did they do? To what does "vain jangling" in 1 Timothy 1:6 refer? What does it mean to be "full of ravening and wickedness" (Luke 11:39)?

To further illustrate the antiquated language of the K.J.V. a list of fifty texts with underlined obsolete words is given in the appendix. Test yourself to see how many of these words you can define correctly. Compare your answers with the definitions given at the end. These obsolete words are all in the current K.J.V., and the list could be greatly expanded. They illustrate the danger that to the reader of the K.J.V., the Bible may appear out of date and irrelevant.

Even more perilous for the understanding than archaic words is the use of words in the K.J.V. that mean something different today than when the K.J.V. was produced. Only a few conspicuous examples can be given here. "Admiration" (Rev. 17:6) in 1611 meant simply "wonder," with no indication of approval. "Addicted" (1 Cor. 16:15) was used in the

good sense of "devoted to." "Let" could mean "bindet" (2 Thess. 2:6, 7). "Conversation" (1 Tim. 4:12) was used for "conduct," not for an interchange of talk. "Prevent" (1 Thess. 4:15) meant "go before" not "hinder."

What is said here regarding the language of this classic version is not intended to disparage the mighty impact it has had on the religion and language of English-speaking people. It is still being read and appreciated for what it really is—the Word of God. Nevertheless, much of its language is foreign to modern man, and the reader must exercise extreme care in interpreting it correctly.

### Early Modern Versions

It is not surprising that near the beginning of the twentieth century a movement arose calling for translations of the Bible into modern English. This movement was given great impetus by the discovery of large quantities of Greek papyri in Egypt during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The study of these papyri revolutionized the study of NT Greek. They revealed that the language in which the NT was written was not classical Greek, or some Jewish-Greek jargon, or a special language of the Holy Ghost. It was rather the *koiné*, the common Greek language of Hellenistic times. The discovered papyri were largely nonliterary documents of everyday life. Scholars became aware that for the most part the NT was written in a plain, simple style to meet the religious needs of ordinary men and women. Should it not then be translated into the same kind of English?

One of the most eloquent advocates of this point of view in America was Edgar Johnson Goodspeed (1871-1962), of the University of Chicago. In his book *New Chapters in New Testament Study*, he wrote:

If the purpose of New Testament translation is to bring what the New Testament writers meant to convey directly and vividly before the modern American reader, then it should not be necessary for him to detour through a course in sixteenth century English, such as is necessary for the understanding of even the simpler parts of the New Testament.—Page 113.

Four of the more prominent modern speech versions of the early twentieth century are worth noting. The first is *The Twentieth Century New Testament* produced by a group of about twenty translators during a fourteen-year period. It is a simple, smooth, accurate, easy-flowing translation designed to make the NT understandable to youth and uneducated people. The tentative edition appeared in three parts between 1898 and 1901. The text was then thoroughly revised and published as a permanent edition in 1902. It was revised and reprinted by the Moody Press in 1961.

In 1903 Richard Francis Weymouth published the first edition of *The New Testament in Modern Speech*. It is a dignified but somewhat free and idiomatic translation into everyday English by a distinguished classical scholar. A number of editions with revisions were published. The fourth edition was thoroughly revised in 1924 by James Alexander Robertson, and has been reprinted several times since.

In 1913 James Moffatt's *The New Testament: A New Translation* came from the press. It was a brilliant and stimulating version, but based, unfortunately, on Von Soden's Greek text. This was followed in 1924 by *The Old Testament: A New Translation* and in 1928 by the whole Bible in modern colloquial, British English. The revised and final edition of the whole Bible was published in 1935.

In 1923 Goodspeed published *The New Testament: An American Translation*, in simple, readable, American English. It was designed to stimulate the average American to read the NT. A companion volume, *The Old Testament: An American Translation*, was published in 1927, the work of T. J. Meek, Leroy Waterman, A. R. Gordon, and J. M. Powis Smith, who also acted as editor. These two volumes were combined in 1931 to produce *The Bible: An American Translation*.

These four versions are important as inaugurateors of the era of modern speech versions in the twentieth century. They served to accustom the English-reading public to the Sacred Scriptures in modern English and thus paved the way for the Revised Standard Version. They also made a contribution to that version. Two of the translators, Goodspeed and Moffatt, served on the NT committee, and the latter was the secretary of the committee. All four versions are still worth reading.

### The Revised Standard Version (R.S.V.)

In 1928 the International Council of Religious Education, which consists of an association of the educational boards of forty major Protestant denominations of the U.S.A. and Canada, received the copyright of the American Standard Version of 1901. This council not only renewed the copyright, but established an American Standard Bible Committee of scholars to act as custodians of the text with authority to make further revisions as deemed advisable. In 1937 the council voted to authorize a new version. The action stated:

There is need for a version which embodies the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and expresses this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship and preserves those qualities

which have given to the King James Version a supreme place in English literature. We therefore define the task of the American Standard Bible Committee to be that of the revision of the present American Standard Bible in the light of the results of modern scholarship, this revision to be designed for use in public and private worship, and to be in the direction of the simple, classic English style of the King James Version.

Thus a committee was authorized to produce the R.S.V., the NT of which was published in 1946, and the OT in 1952. This version is the result of an attempt to combine the general pattern and timeless English of the standard English versions, from Tyndale to the K.J.V., with a vastly improved Greek text and modern diction. In other words, it tries to combine accuracy and modernity with the best of the earlier versions. Its English is characterized by a simplicity and dignity that make it suitable for both private and public worship. The Preface forcefully states its purpose:

The Bible is more than a historical document to be preserved. And it is more than a classic of English literature to be cherished and admired. It is a record of God's dealing with men, of God's revelation of Himself and His will. It records the life and work of Him in whom the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among men. The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a heritage of the past or praise its literary style, but to those who read it that they may discern and understand God's Word to men. That Word must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning. It must stand forth in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today. It is our hope and our earnest prayer that this Revised Standard Version of the Bible may be used by God to speak to men in these momentous times, and to help them to understand and believe His Word.

#### Categories of Later Versions

Since the R.S.V. was published in 1952 there have been more than fifty new English translations of some part or of the whole Bible. Some of these, such as *The New English Bible* (N.E.B.), were already in process of being translated before the R.S.V. was published. The rate of new translations amounts to approximately 2.5 for every year. And the end is probably not in sight. What is the reason for such a profusion of translations? No doubt, there is no one reason that would explain all of these. There has been some advancement in the quality of the text with the appropriation of the Dead Sea manuscripts of the Bible for the OT and the publication of some early manuscripts of the NT. But this does not offer an overriding reason for the flood of new translations. The English language has not changed so significantly in these past twenty or so years as to warrant new translations. The Ugaritic literature has assisted us in under-

standing better some of the Hebrew passages especially in the Psalms, but this in itself is not put forth as a major reason for new translations. As we look at the translations themselves published during this period, these are apparently some of the reasons for the translations:

1. While English has not changed so much in the past twenty years, vernacular English has changed considerably from the style in which the R.S.V. was cast. The R.S.V. is a revision, not a new translation, in the K.J.V. lineage. At the time it was published it seemed to be a radical departure from the K.J.V. (which was in effect the commonly used Bible, although the A.S.V. was a revision of it in 1901), but from our vantage point today it seems to have been too conservative. It had the disadvantage of being a revision and not a new translation and the K.J.V. grip was too difficult to break at that time. In this age of common-speech Bibles it would not be unexpected to have the British counterpart, which was published later, make a complete break from the K.J.V. tradition. Thus the N.E.B. broke new ground among Protestants when an "official" Bible for the first time was published as a new and fresh translation. Among the Catholics this was already done by Ronald Knox in 1945 with the NT, but unfortunately his was a translation based still on the Vulgate. His complete Bible was published in 1955. However, more modern Catholic Bibles, *The Jerusalem Bible* and *The New American Bible*, are based on the originals and are also new translations rather than revisions of the Douay-Challoner model.

Almost all other modern translations are new translations. However, exceptions to this have been Jay Green's simplification of the K.J.V. for children and the revision of the A.S.V. called *The New American Standard Version*.

2. During this period, Bibles continue to be translated for children, young people, and those whose command of English is elementary. The most famous among this group is Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English* which has come out in a revised edition (1973) based on a better Greek text and with phrases not found in the original Greek omitted. In this group are also Laubach's *Inspired Letters in Clearest English* (1956), Annie Cressman's *St. Mark*, translated for English-speaking Liberians (1959), Jay Green's *Children's "King James"* (1960), Norlie's *Simplified New Testament* (1961) also called *One Way: the Jesus People New Testament* (1961), *Listen, . . . the Lord is Speaking* (1966), Burke's *God Is For Real, Man* (1966), *Today's English Version* (1966), Ledyard's *Children's New Testament* (1969).

3. Bibles for special church groups also

continue to be translated. The Jehovah's Witnesses have published *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1961) with its doctrinal bias included in the translation. The name "Jehovah" is used not only in the OT but also in the New. "Spirit" is never capitalized and wherever possible when Christ is referred to as God it is spelled with a small "g," or the translation is so made that God and Jesus Christ are not identified as in Titus 2:13. "Cross" is always translated "torture stake" and "crucify," "impale" without any linguistic basis. In 1972 the Jehovah's Witnesses published Steven Byington's *The Bible in Living English*, which uses Jehovah in the OT but does not have the other doctrinal features. The translator was not a member of that denomination. This translation is rather poorly done as far as style is concerned. *Fan Noli* (1961) translated the New Testament for the Albanian Orthodox Church of America. *The Jerusalem Bible* and *The New American Bible* are translations for Catholics, the former for England, the latter for America, but almost all of the objectionable notes have been omitted or softened. In general, Protestants can profit from both these translations. The Jews are also in the process of publishing a completely new translation of the OT. Previously, Jewish Bibles were based on the K.J.V. tradition. In 1962 *The Torah* (the Pentateuch) was published and since then *The Five Megilloth* (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther) and *Jonah* (1969), *Psalm* (1972), and *Isaiah* (1973).

4. Some translations seek to bring out the force of the originals. They sacrifice literary beauty for what they consider a more accurate translation of the original. In this group we have Wuest's *Expanded New Testament* (1961), *The Amplified Bible* (1965), Blackwelder's *Letters from Paul: An Exegetical Translation* (1971). Charles B. Williams also had attempted to do this earlier in his *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People* (1937). Most of these err on the side of excess. This is especially true of Wuest. Notice these examples: Matthew 10:30: "Moreover, also your hairs, the ones of your head, all of them, have been counted and the result tabulated"; Matthew 16:24, 25: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone is desiring to come after me, let him forget self and lose sight of his own interests, and let him pick up his cross and carry it, and let him be taking the same road with me that I travel, for whoever is desiring to save his soul-life shall ruin it, but whoever will pass a sentence of death upon his soul-life shall find it."

The rationale for *The Amplified Bible* is that a single English word cannot translate a particular Hebrew or Greek word. Therefore, it supplies what it claims to be the various nuances

of the original word by way of amplification. Notice the amplification in the following: Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God (prepared, formed, fashioned,) and created the heavens and the earth"; Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your moral excellence and your praiseworthy, noble and good deeds, and recognize and honor and praise and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." The one word in Greek becomes in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed—happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous [that is, with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions]." Many of the amplifications are unnecessary and do not add anything to the meaning. Some of them add too much and at times give a private interpretation. There is a danger that the amplifications and interpretations are assumed to be part of God's revelation.

5. Some Bibles have been published for people of certain specialized areas. In this group are Clarence Jordan's *Cotton Patch Version* and Carl Burke's *God Is For Real, Man*. Portions of the Bible have also been translated into Black English. The colorful *Cotton Patch Version* is a translation into the common speech of the South, particularly Georgia. It also makes use of modern-day equivalents of ideas, names of places and people, and classes of people. Notice the following translations: Matthew 2:13: "After they checked out, the Lord's messenger made connection with Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get moving, and take your wife and baby and highball it to Mexico'"; Matthew 3:4-6: "This guy John was dressed in blue jeans and a leather jacket and he was living on corn bread and collard greens. Folks were coming to him from Atlanta and all over north Georgia and the backwater of the Chattahoochee"; Matthew 3:7: "When John noticed a lot of Protestants and Catholics showing up for his dipping . . ."; Matthew 13:54-55: "They said, 'Where did that guy get all his learning and big-league stuff? Ain't this the carpenter's hoy? Ain't his mamma named Mary and his brothers Jim and Joe and Simon and Jody?' Some of Jordan's equivalents are very appropriate and thus make the Bible meaningful for people of that area. As in the case of most one-man translations, the style lacks consistency and some incongruous translations appear.

Burke's is not really a translation but a free retelling of portions of the Bible by the children of the inner city. Burke is chaplain of Erie County Jail, Buffalo, New York. In some cases he retells these stories as he heard them expressed. Psalm 28 begins: "The Lord is like my Probation Officer, He will help me, He tries to help me make it every day"; and Psalm 46: "God is a good hideout, He is

stronger than the weight lifter at the Y." The story of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4 reads thus:

Jesus went out by the docks and the man [the devil] tried to con him. He didn't eat for forty days—and was starved.

After that the man came and said, "O.K., if you're the Son of God, let's see you make these red bricks turn into bread."

But he didn't do it. He just said, "Cool it, man, you got to have more than bread if you want to live big." Then the man took him to the steeple of St. Joe's. The man says, "Long way down, huh? Lots of cars too! Let's see ya jump. Don't be chicken. There's some cats with wings to catch you." But Jesus didn't do it. He just said, "Don't try to con God, man, 'cause you can't do it."

Even a version such as this fulfills a need.

6. The attempt to make the Bible simple and clear for the ordinary reader has been the aim of Barclay's *The New Testament* (1969), Bruce's *Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul* (1965), and Taylor's *Living Bible*. Barclay's avowed aim was to "make a translation which did not need a commentary to explain it." Consequently, many times what would ordinarily be placed in the footnotes is placed in the text. Notice the following translations: Mark 10:38: "Can you be submerged in the sea of troubles in which I must be submerged?"; Matthew 9:17: "No more do people pour new fermenting wine into old wine-skins that have lost their elasticity"; Matthew 10:14: "If anyone refuses you a welcome or a hearing, as you leave that house or town, shake the last speck of its dust from your feet, as if you were leaving a heathen town." It is apparent that translations such as these that become interpretive run the risk of adding more than the Scripture says. This is especially true of Taylor's *Living Bible*, which we shall examine in more detail later. Of these, Bruce's is the most responsible.

7. There are those translations that wish to promote certain private ideas or principles. *The Concordant Version* (1957) is based on the belief that "every word in the original should have its own English equivalent." While this view has some merit, especially when translating words common to the Synoptic Gospels, as a whole a word in one language cannot always be translated by the same word in another language. The context must be the determining factor. Lamsa's *The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts* (1957) purports to be produced "from original Aramaic sources." He identifies Aramaic with Syriac, and thus assumes the Syriac Peshitta goes back to the time of the apostles. There are some scholars who believe that some writings of the NT were originally in Aramaic but do not make the claim that the Peshitta represents these. Seventh-day Adventists like to quote Lamsa's

translation of Luke 23:43: "Truly I say to you, Today you will be with me in Paradise," but should be aware that this is not a reliable source. *The Holy Name Bible* (1968) without justification attempts to restore Semitic proper names to their Aramaic or Hebrew form.

8. All translations are made, to some extent at least, because of dissatisfaction with current translations. There are some translations which do not seek to replace but simply to supplement other translations. However, some translations are made to replace some other Bible, at least as the main Bible for that particular reading public, or to provide one where at the present time none is satisfactory. Verkuyl's *Modern Language Bible* (Berkeley) was an attempt to provide a Bible "less interpretive than Moffatt's," "more cultured in language than Goodspeed's, more American than Weymouth's and freer from the King James Version than the Revised Standard." His NT antedated the R.S.V., so that its intention was to take the field which the R.S.V. later did. Unfortunately, its text (Tischendorf's eighth edition) is inadequate. This Bible is fairly literal in its translation philosophy. While its original edition of the NT was poorly done, its revised edition is much improved. One of the most recent translations which, however, had been proposed already in the 1950's is *The New International Version* (1973). Only the NT has been completed but it seems to be a good translation. Its text is generally good and the translation, while not striking, is reliable, accurate, and clear. It will probably be widely used as a Bible for conservative Christians.

### Principles for Evaluating Bible Versions

How does one go about determining which Bible he ought to use from among these and earlier ones such as Weymouth, Moffatt, and Smith-Goodspeed?

There are three basic elements that the reader should look for in evaluating a translation. The most important of these is the text. By this we mean the Hebrew and Greek text from which the translation is made. No translation however accurate or clear it may be can be a good translation if its text is deficient. No translation can be better than its text. Fortunately, most modern translations are based on relatively good original texts. This does not mean that they will always agree. There will always be some differences since it may be difficult to decide which of two or three manuscript readings may be the best. Equally good manuscripts differ. For the OT, what is called the Masoretic text with assistance from other Hebrew texts, especially the manuscripts discovered at Qumran, and the other ancient versions, particularly the Septuagint (the early

Greek translation of the Hebrew) and the Latin Vulgate, will be the basis. More recent translations have made good use of the Qumran OT manuscripts which now give us manuscripts over a thousand years older than the ones previously available. The Masoretic text has been used from the first English translations till the present so that as far as the OT is concerned the text has been relatively stable except where the Hebrew just did not make sense. As far as the NT is concerned, however, there have been more basic differences in the text since the Greek manuscripts used by earlier translators are inferior to those we have today. The Masoretes kept the OT manuscripts rigidly uniform, but this was not the case with the Greek manuscripts, except relatively so in the Middle Ages. When uniformity more or less developed in the Middle Ages, what was preserved was not the earliest form of the text but the text as it had evolved to that time.

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Some of the major differences one would find resulting from the use of different Greek texts are the following:

*The omission or inclusion of passages:* Matthew 16:2, 3; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 22:19b, 20; Luke 22:43, 44; John 7:53-8:11; 1 John 5:7, 8. Other shorter passages are Matthew 6:13; 17:21; 18:11; 21:44; Mark 9:44, 46; Luke 9:56; Acts 8:37; Romans 16:24.

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The second basic element is accuracy in translation. The good Greek or Hebrew text would be of no use if it were not translated carefully and accurately. Here there are different standards by which one judges accuracy. There are different philosophies of translation. On one extreme are those who feel that one should be as literal as possible, even in regard to the order of the words. Words not actually found in the Greek text must be indicated by italics or other devices. The American Standard Version is a good example of this. Notice this passage in Matthew 9:14, 15: "Then come to him the disciples of John. . . . And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Where possible this version will follow the word order of the original. In verse 14 the Greek has the verb preceding the subject. Since this is possible in the English without being too awkward it is so arranged. The Hebraistic expression "sons of the bridechamber" is literally rendered. The R.S.V. translates this expression "the wedding guests." On the other extreme are those who feel that a translation must not only deal with words but also update ideas and customs. Phillips follows this philosophy when instead of "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16), he translates, "Give one another a hearty handshake all round for my sake."

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stronger than the weight lifter at the Y." The story of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4 reads thus:

Jesus went out by the docks and the man [the devil] tried to con him. He didn't eat for forty days—and was starved.

After that the man came and said, "O.K., if you're the Son of God, let's see you make these red bricks turn into bread."

But he didn't do it. He just said, "Cool it, man, you got to have more than bread if you want to live big." Then the man took him to the steeple of St. Joe's. The man says, "Long way down, huh? Lots of cars too! Let's see ya jump. Don't be chicken. There's some cats with wings to catch you."

But Jesus didn't do it. He just said, "Don't try to con God, man, 'cause you can't do it."

Even a version such as this fulfills a need.

6. The attempt to make the Bible simple and clear for the ordinary reader has been the aim of Barclay's *The New Testament* (1969), Bruce's *Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul* (1965), and Taylor's *Living Bible*. Barclay's avowed aim was to "make a translation which did not need a commentary to explain it." Consequently, many times what would ordinarily be placed in the footnotes is placed in the text. Notice the following translations: Mark 10:38: "Can you be submerged in the sea of troubles in which I must be submerged?"; Matthew 9:17: "No more do people pour new fermenting wine into old wine-skins that have lost their elasticity"; Matthew 10:14: "If anyone refuses you a welcome or a hearing, as you leave that house or town, shake the last speck of its dust from your feet, as if you were leaving a heathen town." It is apparent that translations such as these that become interpretive run the risk of adding more than the Scripture says. This is especially true of Taylor's *Living Bible*, which we shall examine in more detail later. Of these, Bruce's is the most responsible.

7. There are those translations that wish to promote certain private ideas or principles. *The Concordant Version* (1957) is based on the belief that "every word in the original should have its own English equivalent." While this view has some merit, especially when translating words common to the Synoptic Gospels, as a whole a word in one language cannot always be translated by the same word in another language. The context must be the determining factor. Lamsa's *The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts* (1957) purports to be produced "from original Aramaic sources." He identifies Aramaic with Syriac, and thus assumes the Syriac Peshitta goes back to the time of the apostles. There are some scholars who believe that some writings of the NT were originally in Aramaic but do not make the claim that the Peshitta represents these.

\*Seventh-day Adventists like to quote Lamsa's

translation of Luke 23:43: "Truly I say to you, Today you will be with me in Paradise," but should be aware that this is not a reliable source. *The Holy Name Bible* (1963) without justification attempts to restore Semitic proper names to their Aramaic or Hebrew form.

8. All translations are made, to some extent at least, because of dissatisfaction with current translations. There are some translations which do not seek to replace but simply to supplement other translations. However, some translations are made to replace some other Bible, at least as the main Bible for that particular reading public, or to provide one where at the present time none is satisfactory. Verkuyl's *Modern Language Bible* (Berkeley) was an attempt to provide a Bible "less interpretive than Moffatt's," "more cultured in language than Goodspeed's, more American than Weymouth's and freer from the King James Version than the Revised Standard." His NT antedated the R.S.V., so that its intention was to take the field which the R.S.V. later did. Unfortunately, its text (Tischendorf's eighth edition) is inadequate. This Bible is fairly literal in its translation philosophy. While its original edition of the NT was poorly done, its revised edition is much improved. One of the most recent translations which, however, had been proposed already in the 1950's is *The New International Version* (1973). Only the NT has been completed but it seems to be a good translation. Its text is generally good and the translation, while not striking, is reliable, accurate, and clear. It will probably be widely used as a Bible for conservative Christians.

#### Principles for Evaluating Bible Versions

How does one go about determining which Bible he ought to use from among these and earlier ones such as Weymouth, Moffatt, and Smith-Goodspeed?

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Notice this translation from the N.E.B. for instance. Instead of "a man clothed in soft raiment" it translates "a man dressed in silks and satins." In its "Introduction" to the New Testament we find the following statement, which sets forth the N.E.B.'s philosophy of translation: "It should be said that our intention has been to offer a translation in the strict sense, and not a paraphrase, and we have not wished to encroach on the field of the commentator. But if the best commentary is a good translation, it is also true that every intelligent translation is in a sense a paraphrase." There is an element of truth in this statement but translations of this sort, especially when they are made by one man, too often offer tendentious translations. He fully believes that he is making an honest translation of the passage but to others he is including his own private interpretation.

It is true that an overly literal, wooden rendering does not translate. Ronald Knox is correct in his criticism of some passages in the K.J.V. when he called it "essentially a word-for-word translation, no less than the Septuagint, no less than the Vulgate. 'For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders'; is that English idiom? 'For the Nazis, and all the Germans, except they say Heil Hitler! meet not in the street, holding their lives valuable'; is that English idiom?" (*Trials of a Translator*, pp. 75, 76). He follows Belloc's principle of translation by asking himself not "How shall I make this foreigner talk English?" but "What would an Englishman have said to express the same?" There is great merit in such translations when they are done with insight, balance, and judiciousness, as we find in most cases in Phillips and the N.E.B. Yet there remains in many minds the lingering doubt whether it is possible to have such free translations serve as their authoritative Bible. The line between commentary and translation should be kept distinct. It must be left to the reader, not the translator, to determine the meaning of the text with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially where such clear-cut meanings are not explicit in the text. This is especially true with ambiguous passages. Nevertheless, this is a very difficult area, since what to one man is ambiguous to another is very clear. The only safeguard against undue individuality of interpretation in translating is a careful scrutiny by a committee of translators who hold a broad spectrum of theological understanding. An accurate translation will not be overly literal but neither will it be too free.

The third basic element in the evaluation of Bible versions is somewhat related to the second although we would prefer to distinguish

between them. For it is possible to be accurate but not clear. An extreme example of such a case is the earlier Wycliffite version. Hebrews 1:1 reads in modern spelling, "Manifold and many manners some time God speaking to fathers in prophets, at the last in these days spoke to us in the son." The intent was to translate from the Vulgate as literally as possible including its word order. According to this standard (though not surely according to the real meaning of translation) the translation is accurate but certainly not clear. Accuracy has to do with the relationship of the text to the translation. Clarity has to do with the relationship of the translation to the reader. It has to do with the structure of the sentence and the vocabulary selected. Much can be learned from the translators of *Today's English Version* who using the principles of linguistics have sought to translate so that people with limited English background would be able to understand the Bible. Thus the rhetorical question, "Do not even the tax collectors do that?" becomes "Even the tax collectors do that!" (Matt. 5:46). Idiomatic expressions are changed into their equivalent meaning. Thus the clause "he does not bear the sword in vain" becomes "his power to punish is real" (Rom. 13:4).

There is a fourth element that is important but not essential. It is the extra that enhances the translation and makes it attractive but, except for literary purposes, is not essential. We refer to style. If you have a version that is based on the best original text (that is, goes back the closest to what the author actually wrote), and it is translated with the greatest accuracy and clarity and put together in a style that is lively and attractive, you have the perfect Bible translation. It is, of course, possible to excel in one of these elements and fail in others. The K.J.V. still maintains a fascination for us because its beauty of style is unsurpassed, but its text is poor and because of the changes in the English language it is not always clear. Its vocabulary not only includes obsolete words but (what is worse), even misleading words, because as used today they have a different meaning from that which they have in that Bible. *The American Standard Version* does better on the text, and excels in accuracy, but fails in literary beauty and clarity.

Compare these two passages from the standpoint of clarity and style:

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11, A.S.V.).

"About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (R.S.V.).

Notice the difference in style between Phil-

lips and the A.S.V. in Romans 12:1, 2:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (A.S.V.).

"With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remodel your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity" (Phillips).

The N.E.B., like Phillips, has a colorful style.

Another element, a fifth, that should be considered in an evaluation of a Bible is its purpose. As we have seen earlier, people translate for various reasons. We cannot be too critical of the style of a certain translation that intentionally is sacrificing style for some other objective, such as accuracy in trying to bring out the force of the original language, or restricts itself in vocabulary and style to translate for those with limited English background. It is not proper to criticize a Bible that is made specifically for private use because it does not measure up to liturgical use. We can, however, expect that a Bible use the best text available and translate that text with accuracy and clarity. Nothing is gained by a translation that is not clear or is inaccurate. Much is lost if it is not based on the best text available today.

#### Evaluations of Leading Versions

Based on these criteria we shall examine a few of the leading Bibles of today. The R.S.V. (1952) is used widely today by Protestants and, by its adoption as the Common Bible, by Catholics as well. The text of the R.S.V. is adequate, although the Bodmer papyri and except for Isaiah the Qumran scrolls were not yet available. The translation as a whole is accurate and it leans toward the conservative end of the spectrum in its philosophy of translation. It is in fact a rather conservative translation. It continues in the tradition of the K.J.V.

When it was first published, the R.S.V. was severely but unjustly criticized by the conservatives, yet when we look back at the event from our vantage point it seems that it was not radical enough. As in the case of the N.E.B., the translators should have produced a new and completely fresh translation. The weakness of the R.S.V. is that it restricted itself to this tradition. This led also to the lack of up-

dating and modernization of expressions. When one reads the Bible there takes place an unconscious translation of thought. Because one is familiar with it, a subtle accommodation is made in one's mind so that what is strange is not considered thus. In the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) we find such expressions as "took his journey into a far country," "I perish here with hunger," "let us eat and make merry," "entreated," and "devoured your living." Found in the Biblical context, we accept these as our vernacular when in fact they are not. What is needed today is a fresh translation of the original texts that would have the same backing and acceptance that the R.S.V. has today. In the meantime it serves us well as a pulpit Bible and for general over-all use because it is a rather faithful translation.

Phillips (1958) is an excellent translation for young people. But because it tends to be free and is a one-man translation, it is less suitable for study purposes than a translation such as the R.S.V. Phillips in his second edition (1973) has sought to make his translation more accurate by omitting interpolated clarifying remarks. His aim was first to make the Bible readable. In doing this, some accuracy was sacrificed but when his translation was to serve as the basis of a commentary, he felt he needed to be more accurate. Even with the second edition great care must be used with Phillips, especially when used for study and doctrine. When used for private devotion, the reader will gain great profit from this version and will say of this Bible what C. S. Lewis said, "It's like seeing an old picture that's been cleaned." The text of his first edition was not the best. In his second edition he changed to the United Bible Societies' Greek text but, unfortunately, does not consistently follow it. Phillips' strength is its readability, clarity, and style. His second edition is touted as a "new translation" but most readers would not realize it and in fact it is not. While some portions have been revised more than others, as a whole it is still the same Phillips.

*The Jerusalem Bible* (1966) was the first complete Catholic English Bible to be translated from the Hebrew and Greek originals. Catholic Bibles previously were translated from the Vulgate. The text is adequate but the translation in some instances is too free. The translation is good but not distinctive. What makes this translation valuable is its copious and informative notes. The American counterpart to this British translation is *The New American Bible*. It is typically American in that it is a clear, simple, and straightforward translation, and on the whole a reliable and accurate one. Of course, like all Catholic Bibles, it includes the Apocrypha, which also was a common

feature of Protestant Bibles until the seventeenth century and which probably will be added again in ecumenical Bibles. It also is based on a good text. Its style is not as colorful as Phillips or the N.E.B. but it is a good translation.

*Today's English Version* (T.E.V.), also known as *Good News for Modern Man*, has been very popular, with more than 35 million copies sold in its first six years. The OT is not yet complete but the NT was published in 1966. This version is written very simply so that even those with limited English background will be able to understand it. Utilizing the principles of linguistics, Robert Bratcher, the translator of the New Testament, has deliberately sought ways to make the Bible as clear and understandable as possible. He has also attempted to translate in a way that will be intelligible to people with no Christian background. Thus technical religious terminology has been studiously avoided such as "repent-repentance," "justify-justification," "reconcile-reconciliation," "propitiate-propitiation."

The text used for the translation of the T.E.V. is the United Bible Societies' (UBS) Greek New Testament. However, it has not followed it exactly. Certain words and even whole verses placed in single brackets in the UBS text have appeared without any brackets in T.E.V., e.g. Matthew 16:2b-3; Luke 23:34; 24:12, 40. T.E.V. has also placed in the texts, in brackets, passages that were only in the critical apparatus of the UBS text. These are Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; Mark 7:16; 9:44, 46; 11:26; 15:28; Luke 17:36; 22:43-44; 23:17; John 5:3b-4; Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:6b-8a; 28:29; Romans 16:24. Unfortunately, these changes do not enhance the translation.

The translation itself, because of its somewhat limited objective, is not as vigorous as Phillips or N.E.B. But it does achieve its objective of making the Bible understandable for the non-Christian as well as those with limited English background. It is also an excellent version for children, although many older persons have also benefited from its clarity. But it does have its self-confessed limitations. It could be used with profit by anyone, but the adult, English, educated reader will prefer a Bible without these limitations of vocabulary and structure.

*The New English Bible* (N.E.B.) (1970) is the counterpart of the R.S.V. It has the distinction of being the first "official" Bible to break away from the fetters of the K.J.V. tradition. It is a completely new translation based, as a whole, on good, reliable texts. It tends to be quite bold in some of its selection of the text (the addition of Jesus before Barabbas, as Jesus Bar-Abbas, in Matthew 27:16, 17; and the substitution of "in warm indigna-

tion" for "moved with pity" in Mark 1:41) but perhaps future versions will follow N.E.B. in some of these selections. The translation itself is a vigorous, colorful English. The Bible comes alive, even though at times there are some Briticisms that may cloud the meaning for the American. While on the whole it is an excellent translation and is wholly in line with its translation theory, for some it will seem to be too free. Whenever a translation is free and unambiguous as the N.E.B. is, there is bound to be dissatisfaction on the part of some with some passages. If one is using the N.E.B. and may have some question about a text, it would be wise to check with the R.S.V. and if there are differences, to check further in a reliable commentary.

*The Living Bible* (T.L.B.) (1971) by Kenneth Taylor has taken the conservative Bible-reading public by storm. It is by far the most popular Bible today among this group. Its popularity is not simply due to the great publicity and advertising which it has received. There is something about this Bible that attracts people to it. It is the American Phillips. The tremendous readability and clarity of Phillips made it a very popular Bible especially with the young. These same qualities are unquestionably present in Taylor's T.L.B. However, there are several drawbacks to this translation. First, it is not a direct translation from the original Greek and Hebrew but is based on another translation, the A.S.V. Second, while it does not indicate the actual original text being followed and while supposedly it is following A.S.V., it deviates from the latter many times to return to the reading of the K.J.V. The text of A.S.V. is none too good, but K.J.V. is worse. The text therefore of this Bible is poor. Third, this is a very free translation, better defined as a paraphrase. While it is possible that a paraphrase may be the best translation of a given passage, nevertheless the danger of adding or omitting thought is much more present in free translations than in straightforward ones. Fourth, while Taylor did have this translation checked by experts, still it is his work as a whole, and in a paraphrase that does not have the checks and balances of a committee of translators the danger of one's idiosyncrasies and private ideas creeping into the text increases greatly.

In regard to the text, passages which were removed from the A.S.V. because of their doubtful authenticity are restored by Taylor. These are Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; Mark 15:28; John 5:3b-5; Acts 8:37; 24:6b-8a; Romans 16:24. There are other passages where part of the verse goes back to the K.J.V. These include Matthew 8:15 (adds, "for them"); 11:19 (adds, "by her children" [see note]); 28:9 (adds, "And as they were run-

ning"); Mark 9:47 (adds, "fires"); Luke 7:19 (adds, "to Jesus"); John 19:3 (omits, "and they came unto him"); 18:21 (adds, "I must by all means be at Jerusalem for the holiday"). In some cases Taylor's translation is so free it is difficult to know whether his differences are due to free translation or to a difference in text. This is shown by the fact that he omits or adds things for which there is no textual basis whatever. Examples of these are: Matthew 6:13, the addition of "Amen"; Mark 5:1, the omission of "Gerasenes/Gadarenes"; 5:41, the omission of "Talitha cumi"; 6:38, the omission of "many knew him/them"; 10:26, the omission of "among themselves/unto him"; Luke 2:2, the omission of "first" before census; 4:5, the replacement of "devil/he" by "Satan"; 22:14, the replacement of "twelve apostles/apostles" by "all," and many others.

There are also interpretive translations such as Genesis 6:2 where the "sons of God" who took wives from the "daughters of men" is translated "beings from the spirit world." Taylor's translation of Isaiah 7:14 "a child shall be born to a virgin" is unfortunate, even though his note indicates that he accepts its applicability also to the time of Isaiah. For him Matthew 1:23 dictates the translation of this verse so that the OT loses its own integrity (see his note for Isaiah 7:14). "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10) becomes "It was the Lord's Day and I was worshiping." Does "in the Spirit" simply mean "worshiping"? Taylor identifies the Lord's Day as the later Lord's Day and assumes therefore that "in the Spirit" means "worshiping." This expression occurs again in chapters 4:2; 17:3; 21:10, and means, the Spirit took control of him, that is, that he was given a vision. Especially tendentious is Taylor's translation of certain passages in the Psalms. Psalm 115:17 is translated by A.S.V. as "The dead praise not Jehovah, neither any that go down into silence." But in the T.L.B. this becomes, "The dead cannot sing praises to Jehovah here on earth." The A.S.V. rendering of Psalm 6:5 reads: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in Sheol who shall give thee thanks?" Taylor translates, "For if I die I cannot give you glory by praising you before my friends," apparently implying that he could praise God in heaven. His theology becomes especially clear in the footnote to Ecclesiastes 9:5: "These statements are Solomon's discouraged opinion, and do not reflect a knowledge of God's truth on these points!" This same type of thing is seen in Psalm 73:24; 2 Timothy 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:14. His translation at times of Sheol as hell is unfortunate and contributes to this same tendency as seen in Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 5:14; Proverbs 9:18; Isaiah 14:9. See also his translation and notes on Mark 12:26,

27; Luke 20:38; Matthew 22:32.

As an example of the freedom (or better, looseness) of Taylor's translation and its interpretive tendency, compare his translation of Mark 1:2, 3 with that of the R.S.V.:

T.L.B.

In the book written by the prophet Isaiah, God announced that he would send his Son to earth, and that a special messenger would arrive first to prepare the world for his coming. "This messenger will live out in the barren wilderness," Isaiah said, "and will proclaim that everyone must straighten out his life to be ready for the Lord's arrival."

R.S.V.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight—"

While Taylor's motivations may be of the highest, his manipulation of Scripture exemplified in Judges 5:27 is certainly questionable. Clearly he did not want to show an apparent discrepancy with chapter 4:21 but is it a translator's prerogative to do that? Usually he is expansive and unambiguous in clarifying what is in the text but here he is concise and omits the troublesome part of the verse. The same harmonizing tendency is seen in his translation of 2 Samuel 21:19 and 1 Chronicles 20:5.

He also takes liberties in his translation of the term "Son of man." He translates it "the Messiah" (Mark 9:13; Luke 21:27; 24:6); "I, the Messiah" (Matt. 8:20; 9:5; 11:19; 12:8, etc.); or simply "I" (Matt. 10:23; 13:41; 16:13; etc.). Thus where in reality there was a reticence on the part of Jesus to designate Himself as the Messiah because of the connotations this title had at the time, we find in the T.L.B. that Jesus openly and frequently makes this claim.

These drawbacks indicate that while Taylor is clear and readable, he does not have the best text and is especially weak in accuracy. One must check Taylor always with a more literal translation, such as the R.S.V. or the A.S.V. One may still read Taylor with spiritual profit but must use it with great caution.

*The New American Standard Bible* (N.A.S.B.) (1971), is a kind of anomaly inasmuch as we already have the revision of the A.S.V.—the R.S.V., which was published in 1952. Apparently these revisers were not satisfied with the work of the R.S.V. committee. As previously mentioned, while the text of the A.S.V. was better than that of the K.J.V. it did not fully

utilize all the findings of the leading textual scholars of the time. N.A.S.B. revisers were aware of this and thus sought to bring their work in line with the twenty-third edition of the Nestle Greek NT. However, there is no consistency in doing this. Matthew 6:13; 18:11; 23:14 are included in the text in brackets, although they are found only in the footnotes of both the A.S.V. and the Nestle Greek text. Contrary to Nestle, but like the A.S.V., Luke 24:12 is printed in the text, though in brackets. The N.A.S.B. follows the A.S.V., against Nestle, in printing the "long ending" of Mark in the text (chap. 16:9-20) in brackets. It also includes the "shorter ending" in italics.

One of the aims of the revisers was to present the translation "in clear and contemporary language." But a comparison with a common speech version will show how far this is from reality. Anyone who reads Matthew 5:1-13 in this version will hardly notice any difference from the A.S.V. or any improvement over the R.S.V. Examining its rendering of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), we find much of the language and idiom of the K.J.V. While the language is intelligible, it is not contemporary and direct. Robert Bratcher of the American Bible Society, after examining the first edition of the Gospel of John in this translation, affirms that "the English language of this text is no better in 1962 than the A.S.V. language was in 1901." He further states: "It is doubtful whether the A.S.V. really merits this kind of revision. . . . A much more thorough-going, consistent, adequate and accurate revision of the A.V.-E.R.V.-A.S.V. translation [R.S.V.] has already been published and gained widespread acceptance in the English-speaking world." A careful comparison with the R.S.V. in this prodigal son passage confirms this as well as the rest of the Bible generally.

The N.A.S.B. format that reverts to the K.J.V. practice of beginning each verse at the left margin as though each verse were an independent oracle is unfortunate. It is true that the paragraph divisions are indicated by the bold print verse numbers, but this will not alleviate the problem greatly. It militates against Bible passages being understood in their context and leads to the abuse of the proof-text method. Another questionable practice, because it is in fact impossible to be consistent with this, is the italicizing of words that are not explicitly found in the original. The text of the N.A.S.B. is not the best and its literary style and outdated idioms are not conducive to clarity. The need for such a translation is not apparent any more than a "modernization" of the K.J.V., especially as it does not advance beyond the R.S.V. What led to the lack of popularity of the A.S.V. is still present

in N.A.S.B., that is its lack of readability, and this will cause the N.A.S.B. to have the same fate as the A.S.V. The relatively poor text will also militate against its being used as a study Bible, although with care it may be so used.

One of the most recent Bible translations is *The New International Version* (N.I.V.) (1973). Sponsored by evangelicals and made up of a team of international and interdenominational scholars, this translation has the potential of taking the field as the Bible for general use among the conservative churches. A more confident analysis can be made only after the OI has been published. Thus the remarks made here can only be applied to the NT. Its text can stand some improvement but as a whole is adequate. The inclusion of Matthew 21, 44; Luke 24:6a, 12, 36, 40, 51 is unfortunate. The treatment of Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11 can be improved. But as a whole it is a good eclectic text.

The translation itself is generally accurate, clear, and straightforward. It does not have the spiciness of Phillips or the N.E.B. nor the readability of the T.L.B. but it is a good, faithful translation in a much more up-to-date language and style than the N.A.S.B. or even the R.S.V. Since it has a conservative orientation, one would expect that it would translate the following passages thus: "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39); "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen" (Rom. 9:5). Though not frequently used, brackets are placed around words that have been supplied. This is unfortunate since it is so difficult, almost impossible, to be consistent in this respect. The N.I.V. does not consistently modernize expressions of time, money, measure, and distance. In some cases the same word is modernized in one place but in another it is not. In spite of these slight deficiencies, there is much to commend in this translation.

The N.E.B. perhaps is too free a translation for many. The N.A.B. is a good translation but since it is a Catholic Bible it will probably not find general acceptance among Protestants. The N.A.S.B. has too many bad features to fill the gap. Until the R.S.V. is modernized and translated from the originals as a completely fresh translation, it could well be that the N.I.V. will fill the gap for a good, reliable, accurate, and clear translation written in contemporary [American] language not only for the conservatives but for Protestants generally. It does not have the striking characteristics of Phillips or N.E.B., but is dependable and straightforward. It is more modern than the R.S.V. and less free than N.E.B. or Phillips. The following shows what this translation is like:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Any-one who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-20).

### In Summary

Perhaps there is no one Bible that will completely satisfy a particular individual, not to mention a group of individuals. Because of this it would be more satisfactory if an individual had several Bible versions for different purposes—one for serious Bible study, another for devotional reading, and a third for public reading in church.

For serious Bible study, the literal translations would be preferable, such as the R.S.V. We could include here the A.S.V. and the N.A.S.B., but we should be aware of their weaknesses, which have been pointed out above. Still preferable to this, of course, is the study of the Scriptures in the original languages whenever possible, for ultimately all translations must go back to the originals, and thus all doctrines must find their basis in the original text rather than in a particular translation. In view of the flood of versions, it is more imperative than ever that our ministers become familiar with these languages.

For devotional reading, such versions as the N.E.B., Phillips, and the T.L.B., with the cautions we have indicated, can be used with profit. Other earlier versions such as Moffatt, Goodspeed, and Weymouth can also be read for this purpose. In fact, it would be well if a variety of versions were used, including the Catholic versions, since it is easy to become so familiar with a certain version that its renderings do not impress. Another translation of the same passage might bring some shade of meaning that had not been obtained from previous reading of Scripture. New and different ways of expressing the Biblical message shake us out of our familiarity and help us see and understand God's message better.

For public reading in church, especially in responsive reading or reading in unison, the logical choice is the version that is used by the majority, and this means, at present, the K.J.V. However, because of the limitations of that translation produced by the passage of time

and recent discoveries it would be far better to select a more modern version such as the R.S.V. Perhaps the N.I.V. when completed will be the Bible to supplant the K.J.V. among conservatives, but until that day the R.S.V. can be used acceptably.

At the present time, if one were to have only one Bible, the most versatile is the R.S.V. But better to have several versions and use them according to the particular need and purpose.

Although we have mentioned some weaknesses of the different versions it should be emphasized that these involve only a very small part of the whole Bible. They are still the Word of God and the good news through which men can find God and eternal life. Many a pioneer missionary with much less training and equipment (perhaps with only the K.J.V.) than the above-mentioned translators has translated the Bible or portions of it for the first time into some exotic language. Inadequate though such fumbling efforts may have been, versions produced in this way have been the means of leading many to Jesus Christ. The objective of all translators is to lead people to read the Word of God, and thus to come to know God. We commend them all for these noble efforts.

"The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever" (R.S.V.).

## APPENDIX

### Obsolete Language in the K.J.V.

1. Ps. 35:15 yea, the *abjects* gathered themselves together against me
2. Acts 19:31 desiring him that he would not *adventure* himself into the theatre
3. Ruth 4:4 And I thought to *advertise* thee
4. Luke 14:32 he *sendeth* an *ambassage*
5. Deut. 22:19 and they shall *amece* him in an hundred shekels of silver
6. 1 Sam. 20:40 And Jonathan gave his *artillery* unto his lad
7. Isa. 8:21 And they shall pass through it, hardly *be-*stead and hungry
8. Hab. 2:7 And thou shalt be for *booties* unto them
9. Deut. 28:27 The Lord will smite thee with the *botch* of Egypt and against him that lifteth himself up in his *brigandine*
10. Jer. 51:8

11. Jer. 14:4	Because the ground is <i>chapt</i>	30. Acts 19:38	let them <i>implead</i> one another
12. Dan. 8:7	He was moved with <i>choler</i> against him	31. Luke 23:23	And they were <i>instant</i> with loud voices
13. Isa. 32:7	The instruments also of the <i>churl</i> are evil	32. Ps. 4:2	how long will ye . . . seek after <i>leasing</i> ?
14. Jer. 38:11	and took thence old <i>cast</i> cloths	33. Eze. 47:11	and the <i>marshes</i> thereof shall not be healed
15. Esther 7:4	Although the enemy could not <i>countervail</i> the king's damage	34. Lev. 19:35	Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in <i>meteyard</i> . . .
16. 1 Kings 14:3	And take with thee ten loaves, and <i>cracknels</i>	35. Rom. 7:5	the <i>mations</i> of sins . . . did work in our members
17. Isa. 3:22	and the <i>wimples</i> , and the <i>crisping pins</i>	36. Luke 19:20	which I have kept laid up in a <i>napkin</i>
18. Deut. 22:6	And the <i>dam</i> sitting upon the young	37. Job 41:18	By his <i>neesings</i> a light doth shine
19. Judges 1:23	And the house of Joseph sent to <i>desry</i> Bethel	38. Neh. 13:26	nevertheless even him did <i>outlandish</i> women cause to sin
20. Jer. 50:36	A sword is upon the liars; and they shall <i>dote</i>	39. 2 Cor. 2:5	that I may not <i>overcharge</i> you all
21. Isa. 30:24	The oxen likewise and the young asses that <i>ear</i> the ground shall eat clean provender	40. Prov. 9:15	To call <i>passengers</i> who go right on their ways
22. 1 Peter 3:11	Let him <i>eschew</i> evil . . . ; let him seek peace, and <i>ensue</i> it	41. Gen. 30:37	and <i>pilled</i> white <i>stakes</i> in them
23. 2 Peter 2:14	an heart they have <i>exercised</i> with covetous practices	42. Isa. 52:12	and the God of Israel will be your <i>reward</i>
24. Isa. 14:8	no <i>faller</i> is come up against us	43. 1 Peter 4:4	that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot and <i>scrabbled</i> on the doors of the gate
25. Zech. 1:21	but these are come to <i>fray</i> them	44. 1 Sam. 21:13	sith thou hast not hated blood
26. Lev. 13:55	it is <i>fret</i> inward	45. Eze. 35:6	they are <i>softish</i> children
27. Gen. 31:10	the rams . . . were <i>gristled</i>	46. Jer. 4:22	I <i>trow</i> not
28. 2 Chron. 26:14	And Uzziah prepared for them . . . spears, and helmets, and <i>habergeons</i>	47. Luke 17:9	Save yourselves from this <i>untoward</i> generation
29. Acts 8:9	And <i>haling</i> men and women committed them to prison	48. Acts 2:40	we do you to <i>wit</i> of the grace of God
		49. 2 Cor. 8:1	<i>Woe</i> worth the day!
		50. Eze. 30:2	

#### Meanings of Italicized Words:

1. outcasts	17. head coverings . . . curling irons	34. measuring stick
2. venture	18. mother bird	35. emotions
3. inform, give notice	19. spy out	36. handkerchief
4. embassy	20. conduct themselves foolishly	37. sneezings
5. fine	21. plow, till	38. foreign
6. bow and arrows	22. shun . . . pursue	39. overload, burden
7. oppressed	23. made familiar	40. passers-by
8. plunder	24. one who cuts down	41. peeled . . . streaks
9. swollen sore	25. frighten	42. rear guard
10. coat of armor	26. corroded, decayed	43. dissolute living
11. cracked	27. mixed with gray	44. scribbled, scrawled
12. anger	28. short sleeveless coats of mail	45. since
13. niggardly person	29. hauling	46. foolis' . . . mid
14. old rags	30. bring charges against	47. sup
15. compensate for	31. importunate	48. per
16. crackers	32. falsehood	49. caus
	33. marshes	50. evil be